

Measure 5: Seattle Central Business District (CBD) Customer Surveys

Monitoring Objectives

- Formally assess downtown user perceptions, behavior and satisfaction levels before and during tunnel closure and after the tunnel reopens to transit use in order to assess the effectiveness of the mitigation measures sponsored by the interagency Monitor and Maintain (M & M) team.
- Collect informal feedback from downtown user after tunnel closure to better understand if the mitigation efforts are working well or poorly and to identify key areas for immediate improvement or fine-tuning.

Methodology

There are two survey instruments that are being employed to gauge the public reaction to tunnel closure.

The first instrument is a formal survey employing the services of a full service research consultant who will survey randomly selected cluster samples downtown of groups targeted for the survey. The type of information collected from bus riders is as follows: purpose of downtown travel; frequency of downtown travel and changes in that frequency; changes in using the bus to travel downtown; overall impression of downtown Seattle; and transit rider satisfaction or dissatisfaction with a number of factors such as travel time by bus through downtown, personal space when waiting at stops, time between buses, on-time performance of buses, location of stops predictability of bus arrivals and departures, and personal security waiting for buses when dark and during the day.

The kinds of information to be reported for drivers to downtown include: purpose of downtown travel; frequency of downtown travel and changes in that frequency; changes in using a car to travel to downtown; overall impression of downtown Seattle; and driver satisfaction or dissatisfaction with travel time through downtown by car, convenience of routes through downtown by car, clarity of information (signage, rules) for drivers downtown, ability to park downtown, convenience of parking to destination, and cost of parking

Information from both drivers and transit users will be collected to learn about their general satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the following: being able to walk around downtown without feeling crowded; personal security when walking around downtown; adequacy/clarity of information given to downtown users about the tunnel project; things that are working well and working poorly; performance of those responsible for helping ease disruptions; and recommendations for needed changes or adjustments. Approximately 1,000 downtown users will be surveyed with each formal survey. The survey itself will require 10-15 minutes to complete.

A “before” survey was conducted in spring 2005. The results of this “before” survey were reported in the Volume 1 Baseline Report that was issued in September 2005. These results will be updated with two more formal surveys, one to be conducted during tunnel closure in the summer of 2006 and another to be conducted after the tunnel reopens to transit travel in the summer of 2008. Readers are referred to *Volume 1: Baseline Conditions* for the complete discussion of this “before” survey. However, one of the main conclusions for this survey was that the respondents generally had a positive impression of the downtown, that they did not feel crowded when moving around downtown and that they were satisfied with their personal security and safety

The second instrument that will be used to gauge public opinion about tunnel closure will be smaller intercept surveys on a sample of approximately 200 to 300 downtown users. This intercept survey will provide some early feedback on what downtown constituents are feeling about tunnel closure. Given the difference in methodology and sample size, it should be emphasized that the results of the quick feedback survey cannot be compared with the results of the more formal customer survey of downtown users described above. They should be viewed as providing information that is similar to the type of information that can be gotten from small focus groups.

The first small scale intercept survey was conducted in fall 2005 immediately following tunnel closure. Participants were recruited at selected bus stops, and along key downtown streets affected by tunnel closure to participate in this survey. The consultant solicited names and telephone numbers from downtown users and then telephoned them for a short 10 minute survey. This informal sample of downtown users was put together during the PM period (2-6 p.m.) for the fall 2005 quick feedback survey. The survey collected their opinions about what is working well or poorly in following areas: getting to and through downtown; assessment of crowding on streets and sidewalks; clarity of signage and information being provided about tunnel closure; changes to bus service and car routing that were done in response to tunnel closure; and other information/opinions they may choose to offer. Respondents were also asked for their recommendations on how things could be improved. These types of surveys can provide a general sense for how downtown users are being impacted by tunnel closure. While not statistically valid, like focus groups, inferences can be drawn.

In addition to the quick feedback survey that was completed in fall 2005, two more quick feedback surveys will be conducted, one in the spring of 2006 and the second in the spring of 2007.

Summary Observations from the Informal Intercept Survey, Fall 2005

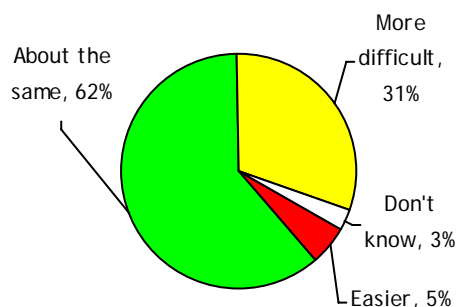
While a majority of respondents felt it was not more difficult to get to downtown, that their buses were on time and that the convenience of their bus stop locations has not changed, a sizable minority of respondents believe these travel elements had gotten worse since the tunnel closed. Respondents were evenly divided on whether it now takes more time to get through downtown and whether downtown is more crowded than before the tunnel closure.

Most respondents (62 percent) think getting to downtown is about the same as it was before the tunnel closed, but nearly one in three respondents (31 percent) said getting downtown is more difficult than it used to be (Figure 17).

The survey findings also clearly demonstrate the success of efforts to provide information about tunnel closure to those traveling to and from downtown Seattle. The vast majority of respondents (93 percent) said they knew about the tunnel closure before it happened.

Figure 17.
Ease of Traveling to Downtown Before & After Tunnel Closure
All respondents

(Base = 329)



Question 12A: Comparing downtown now to before the tunnel closure, would you say getting to downtown is easier, about the same, or more difficult?

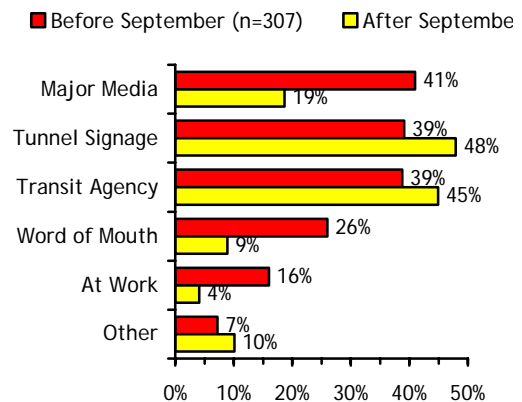
"Don't know" responses not shown.

Most respondents (52 percent) learned of the tunnel closure from more than one source. The most popular information sources were major media such as newspaper, television and radio (41 percent) followed by tunnel signage at the bus tunnel and on downtown streets (39 percent) and information from transit agencies such as signs posted at bus stops, brochures, rider alerts, etc. (39 percent). Figure 18 shows the main information sources respondents used.

Respondents who reported seeing information about the tunnel closure after September 24, 2005 were asked to rate the information they received. As Figure 19 shows, six in ten respondents (61 percent) found the information very informative and an additional 34 percent said it was somewhat informative.

Respondents who received information from a transit website or transit timetables were the most likely to say the information they received was very informative (92 percent and 100 percent respectively). The radio and newspaper articles were also valued information sources with 86 percent and 76 percent respectively rating these sources as very informative.

Figure 18.
Tunnel Closure Information Sources
Respondents who heard about the tunnel closure
(Bases listed below)

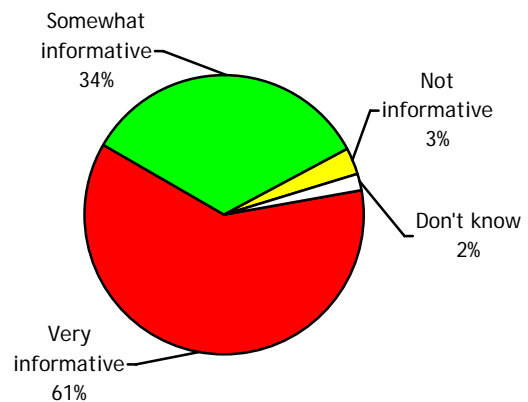


Question 6: Where did you see that information (before tunnel closed)?

Question 7: Since September 24, where have you seen information about the tunnel closure?

Multiple responses accepted.

Figure 19. How Informative Was the Information Received
Respondents who saw information about the tunnel closure after September 24, 2005
(Base = 286)

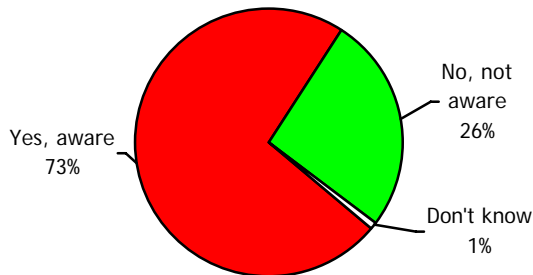


Question 8: How would you rate the level of information you received? Would you say it was very informative, somewhat informative or not informative?

May not sum to 100% due to rounding.

Figure 20.
Awareness of Joint Efforts to Minimize Traffic Impacts
All respondents

(Base = 329)



Question 9: Are you aware that the City of Seattle, King County Metro, Sound Transit and Community Transit have been working together to minimize the impacts of the tunnel closure and keep downtown Seattle open and accessible?

May not sum to 100% due to rounding.

Figure 21.
Suggestions for Improving Downtown Seattle
All Respondents

(Base)	Total (329)
Bus Service Issues (Net)	40%
Buses too crowded/need more or bigger buses	14
Buses come late/early	6
Run buses more often	6
Change bus route and/or stop location	4
Too many/too few bus stops	4
Bus stops not covered/Shelters in wrong place	3
Bus stops are confusing/hard to find right bus	3
Better bus connections/difficult to transfer	2
Provide assistance to find right bus/bus stop	2
Buses bunch up/need to space out bus runs	2
Traffic Flow (Net)	16%
Close Third Avenue to traffic/Make Third transit only	6
Reopen the tunnel	3
Direct downtown traffic/Improve traffic flow	3
Increase transit use/decrease driving	2
More bus only streets/lanes	2
Light Rail (Net)	3%
Light rail is a good idea/support light rail	3
Light rail is a bad idea/oppose light rail	<1
Information (Net)	3%
Better/more signage	2
Better/more information on website	1
Increase Security/Address Panhandling	4%
Other	12%

Question 19: The transit and government agencies are very interested in hearing suggestions from people who come downtown. What specific recommendations for improvements can you suggest?

Multiple responses accepted.

Nearly three in four respondents (73 percent) said they were aware of the joint efforts of transit agencies and the City of Seattle to minimize the impacts of the tunnel closure (Figure 20). Bus riders were more likely to be aware of the joint effort than car travelers (75 percent versus 52 percent)

Bus riders who said it takes longer to get through downtown since the tunnel closed were asked to identify the locations where vehicle traffic is the most difficult. Responses were tallied based on the number of times each street was mentioned. The streets most commonly mentioned as problem areas were: Third Avenue, Stewart Street, Second Avenue, Fourth Avenue, Fifth Avenue, and Pike Street. A complete list of street names by descending order of mention is shown in Figure 22. A hand tally of specific intersections mentioned found that the most commonly mentioned intersections were:

- Third Avenue and Pike Street (6 mentions)
- Fifth Avenue and Stewart (4 mentions)
- Third Avenue and Stewart (3 mentions)

Perceptions of how easy or difficult it is for people to travel to and through downtown Seattle since the tunnel closure are mixed. Respondents were asked what suggestions they had for improving downtown Seattle. As Figure 21 shows, most responses related either to bus service (40 percent) or traffic flow (16 percent).

Figure 22.
Downtown Locations Where Vehicle Traffic is Difficult

Bus riders who said travel time through downtown is worse than before tunnel closure

Street Name (Base)	% (119)	Street Name (Base)	% (119)
Third Avenue	35%	Getting on/off freeway	3%
Stewart	23	Seventh Avenue	3
Second Avenue	18	Near King St. Station	3
Fourth Avenue	12	Madison	3
Fifth Avenue	10	Seneca	2
Pike	10	Chinatown	2
Pine	7	Columbia	2
Union	7	James	1
First Avenue	5	Rainier Avenue	1
Ninth Avenue	4	Washington	1
Downtown (general)	4	Olive Way	1
Jackson	3	Other	10
Virginia	3	Don't know	9

Question 16B: At what locations does the vehicle traffic seem to be the most difficult?

Multiple responses accepted.